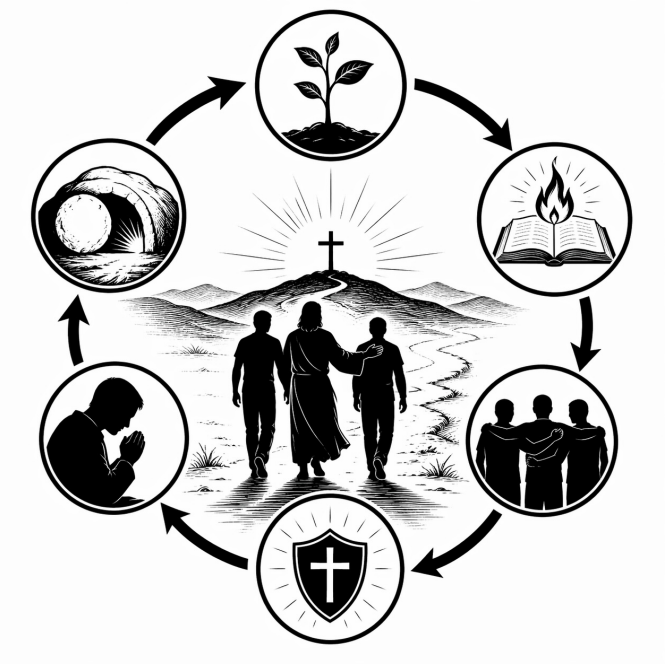
Pattern of Discipleship in the New Testament



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Pattern of Discipleship in the New Testament

A Reproducible Framework from Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Peter, and James (NASB 2020)

Purpose

This pattern answers a simple but foundational question:

What should we teach a new believer to obey? (Matthew 28:20)

Across Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Peter, and James, we find a consistent, repeatable discipleship pattern that is:

* Biblically grounded
* Simple enough to reproduce
* Deep enough to mature believers
* Designed for multiplication

Overview of the Pattern

1. New Birth (Identity)
2. Transformation (Put Off / Put On)
3. Word & Spirit (Inner Life)
4. Relationships (Community Life)
5. Stand Firm (Spiritual Warfare)
6. Watch & Pray (Sustaining Practices)

1. New Birth: The Foundation of Life

Core Idea

The Christian life begins with a supernatural act of God —new birth through His Word.

Key Actions

Receive, believe, be born again

Scriptures

James 1:18
1 Peter 1:23–25
Colossians 3:10–11
Ephesians 4:22–24

Commands to Obey

* Receive the Word
* Embrace your new identity

Summary

We are not improved versions of our old selves—we are new creations, born through the Word and renewed into the image of Christ.

Reproduction Expression

* Share the Word that brings new birth
* Invite others into obedience-based faith

2. Transformation: Put Off / Put On

Core Idea

New identity must be expressed through intentional transformation.

Key Actions

Repent, remove, replace, obey

Scriptures

Colossians 3:8–9
Ephesians 4:25–27
1 Peter 2:1–3
James 1:21–22

Commands to Obey

* Rid yourselves of sin
* Speak truth
* Receive the Word
* Do the Word

Summary

Discipleship is an ongoing exchange—putting off the old ways and actively putting on Christlike character.

Reproduction Expression

* Practice accountability
* Model repentance and obedience
* Help others identify and replace sin patterns

3. Word & Spirit: The Inner Life

Core Idea

A transformed life flows from a heart filled with the Word and the Spirit.

Key Actions

Abide, listen, worship, give thanks, obey

Scriptures

Colossians 3:16–17
Ephesians 5:18–21
James 1:25
1 Peter 4:12–14

Commands to Obey

* Let the Word dwell richly
* Be filled with the Spirit
* Continue in the Word
* Rejoice in suffering

Summary

A Word-filled and Spirit-filled life produces worship, gratitude, obedience, humility, and perseverance.

Reproduction Expression

* Teach others to hear and obey God
* Practice Scripture together
* Cultivate worship and thanksgiving

4. Relationships: Life in Community

Core Idea

Transformation becomes visible in everyday relationships.

Key Actions

Submit, love, honor, serve, obey

Scriptures

Ephesians 5:21–6:9
Colossians 3:18–22
1 Peter 2:13–3:7
James 4:7a

Commands to Obey

* Submit to one another
* Love sacrificially
* Honor authority
* Submit to God

Summary

The new life becomes visible in ordinary relationships—marriage, family, work, society, and civic life. The common thread is humble, God-centered submission.

Reproduction Expression

* Model Christ-centered relationships
* Establish healthy family and community patterns

5. Stand Firm: Spiritual Warfare

Core Idea

Disciples must actively resist spiritual opposition and stand firm in faith.

Key Actions

Stand, resist, be alert, remain firm

Scriptures

Colossians 4:12
Ephesians 6:10–17
1 Peter 5:8–12
James 4:7b

Commands to Obey

* Put on the armor of God
* Resist the devil
* Be alert and sober
* Stand firm in faith

Summary

Mature disciples do not drift. They stand, resist, and remain alert, trusting in God's sustaining grace.

Reproduction Expression

* Train believers to endure hardship
* Teach spiritual warfare and discernment
* Normalize perseverance under pressure

6. Watch & Pray: The Sustaining Life

Core Idea

Prayer sustains and empowers every aspect of discipleship.

Key Actions

Pray, watch, give thanks, intercede, speak wisely

Scriptures

Colossians 4:2–6
Ephesians 6:18
1 Peter 4:7
James 5:13-18

Commands to Obey

* Devote yourselves to prayer
* Be alert and persevering
* Pray at all times in the Spirit
* Live with urgency and clarity

Summary

Prayer is not an appendix to the Christian life—it is the atmosphere in which everything else happens.

Reproduction Expression

* Establish prayer rhythms
* Multiply intercessors
* Pray for open doors and gospel advance

Integrated Pattern (Cycle of Life and Growth)

This pattern is not linear but cyclical and reinforcing:

New Birth → Transformation → Word & Spirit → Relationships → Stand Firm → Watch & Pray → (deepens and multiplies)

Each element strengthens the others and contributes to ongoing maturity and multiplication.

Multiplication Insight

This pattern reflects a transferable apostolic framework:

* It is simple enough to pass on quickly
* It is comprehensive enough to form mature disciples
* It integrates identity, character, practices, community, and mission

Important Clarification

This framework is not merely about external behaviors.

It is about multiplying the life of Christ Himself:

* The fruit of the Spirit is the goal
* These patterns are the means through which that life grows and multiplies

Conclusion

Taken together, these four letters present a unified discipleship pattern that can be:

* Taught clearly
* Practiced immediately
* Shared reproducibly

This is not just theology—it is a template for multiplying disciples and simple churches.

Remarkable Structural Consistency

All four books follow essentially the same discipleship flow:

* Identity → Transformation → Inner Life → Relationships → Warfare → Prayer

This strongly suggests a shared apostolic teaching pattern, not coincidence.

	New Birth —>	Transformation —>	Word & Spirit —>	Relationships —>	Resist & Stand —>	Watch & Pray —>
Key Commands	receive, believe, repent	put off, put on, obey	be filled, abide	submit, love	resist, stand	watch, pray, thank
Group Practices	testimonies, gospel share	confess, obey	discuss, sing, thank, obey	serve, reconcile, love	share in trials	pray together
Reproduction	share gospel	coach repentance	train obedience	model community	train endurance	multiply prayer
APEST focus	Evangelist	Teacher	Apostle	Shepherd	Prophet	Prophet
Ephesians	4:22-24	4:25-5:17	5:18-21	5:21-6:9	6:10-17	6:18
Colossians	3:10:11	3:8-9	3:16-17	3:18-22	4:12	4:2-6
1 Peter	1:23-25	2:1-3	4:12-14	2:13-3:7	5:8-12	4:7
James	1:18	1:21-22	1:25	4:7	4:7	5:13-18

Scripture Passages for the Pattern

1. New Creation: The Foundation of Life

The Christian life begins with a supernatural act of God—new birth through His Word.

James 1:18

> *"In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures."*

1 Peter 1:23–25

> *"For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*
> *For,*
> *'All flesh is like grass,*
> *And all its glory like the flower of grass.*
> *The grass withers,*
> *And the flower falls off,*
> *But the word of the Lord endures forever.'*
> *And this is the word which was preached to you."*

Colossians 3:10–11

> *"And have put on the new self, which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created it— a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, and free, but Christ is all, and in all."*

Ephesians 4:22–24

> *"That, in reference to your former way of life, you are to rid yourselves of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."*

Summary:
We are not improved versions of our old selves—we are new creations, born through the Word and renewed into the image of Christ.

2. The Walk: Put Off / Put On

This new identity must be lived out through intentional transformation.

Colossians 3:8–9

> *"But now you also, rid yourselves of all of them: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you stripped off the old self with its evil practices."*

Ephesians 4:25–27

> *"Therefore, ridding yourselves of falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, because we are parts of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the*

sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity."

1 Peter 2:1–3

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, and like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

James 1:21–22

"Therefore, ridding yourselves of all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves."

Summary:
Discipleship is an ongoing exchange—putting off the old ways and actively putting on Christlike character.

3. Word and Spirit: The Inner Life

A transformed life flows from a heart filled with the Word and the Spirit.

Colossians 3:16–17

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with

psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

Ephesians 5:18–21

"And do not get drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father; and subject yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ."

James 1:25

"But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and has continued in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does."

1 Peter 4:12–14

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that at the revelation of His glory you may also rejoice and be overjoyed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory, and of God, rests upon you."

Summary:
A Word-filled and Spirit-filled life produces worship, gratitude, obedience, humility, and perseverance.

4. Relational Patterns: Life in Community

Transformation becomes visible in everyday relationships.

Ephesians 5:21–25

> *"And subject yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."*

Colossians 3:18–20

> *"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not become bitter against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord."*

1 Peter 2:13–15

> *"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will*

of God, that by doing right you silence the ignorance of foolish people."

James 4:7a

"Submit therefore to God."

Summary:

The new life becomes visible in ordinary relationships—marriage, family, work, society, and civic life. The common thread is humble, God-centered submission expressed through obedience, honor, love, and faithful witness.

5. Standing Firm: Spiritual Resistance

Colossians 4:12

"Epaphras, who is one of your own, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings, always striving earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God."

Ephesians 6:10–17

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and

having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having belted your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having strapped on your feet the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

1 Peter 5:8–12

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. So resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brothers and sisters who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!"

James 4:7b

"But resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Summary:

Mature disciples do not drift. They stand. They resist. They remain alert. Spiritual maturity includes clarity about the reality of opposition and confidence in God's sustaining grace.

6. Watchfulness and Prayer

Colossians 4:2–6

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way that I ought to proclaim it.
Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Your speech must always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."

Ephesians 6:18

"With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be alert with all perseverance and every request for all the saints."

1 Peter 4:7

"The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer."

James 5:13-18

"Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. A prayer of a righteous person, when it is brought about, can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."

Summary:
Prayer is not an appendix to the Christian life. It is the atmosphere in which believers remain watchful, spiritually clear, thankful, missionally ready, and dependent on God.

Integrated Conclusion

Taken together, these four letters present a coherent pattern of discipleship:

New creation/birth establishes a new identity.
Putting off and putting on describes moral transformation.
Word and Spirit form the inner life (teaching, singing, thanking, submitting).
Relationships display the gospel in daily conduct (spouses, parent/child, workplace, unbelievers, government).
Standing firm and/or resisting prepares believers for conflict and spiritual warfare.
Watchfulness and prayer sustain the whole life of discipleship.

This suggests a simple but profound apostolic pattern—one that could be taught, lived, and reproduced across many communities of believers. These topics and patterns are included in Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Peter, and James, and partially in other New Testament books.

Suggested Uses for this Booklet

1. Search the New Testament for instructions related to each of the six key themes. Compile the passages into a list for each of them.
2. Pick one key passage related to each theme and conduct a three-thirds style study series (or discovery Bible study) based on the six topics over a six-week period.
3. Prepare a list of accountability questions for those in your church to use with their accountability partners in their weekly meetings.

See the following pages for samples of each of these possible uses. Feel free to adapt those or use your own. In particular, the list of related passages is intentionally very incomplete. There are many more that could be included.

Partial NT Passage List by Discipleship Theme

1. New Birth (Identity / New Life)

Core idea: Born again through God's Word and Spirit

* John 1:12–13
* John 3:1–8
* John 5:24
* 2 Corinthians 5:17
* Ephesians 2:1–10
* Titus 3:4–7
* James 1:18
* 1 Peter 1:3, 23–25

2. Transformation (Put Off / Put On / Obedience)

Core idea: Ongoing change into Christlikeness

* Romans 6:1–14
* Romans 12:1–2
* Ephesians 4:17–32
* Colossians 3:5–17
* James 1:21–25
* 1 Peter 2:1–3
* Hebrews 12:1–2

3. Word & Spirit (Inner Life / Abiding)

Core idea: Life shaped by God's Word and Spirit

* John 8:31–32
* John 14:15–17
* John 15:1–8
* Acts 2:38–42
* Romans 8:1–14
* Galatians 5:16–25
* Colossians 3:16–17
* 2 Timothy 3:16–17
* James 1:25

4. Relationships (Community / Love / Submission)

Core idea: The gospel expressed in relationships

* John 13:34–35
* John 17:20–23
* Acts 2:42–47
* Romans 12:9–21
* Ephesians 5:21–6:9
* Colossians 3:12–19
* Philippians 2:1–5
* James 4:1–10
* 1 Peter 2:13–3:7

5. Stand Firm (Spiritual Resistance / Perseverance)

Core idea: Resisting opposition and enduring in faith

* Matthew 4:1–11
* Luke 22:31–32
* Romans 8:31–39

* Ephesians 6:10–18
* Philippians 1:27–30
* James 4:7
* 1 Peter 5:8–10
* 2 Timothy 2:3–4
* Hebrews 10:32–39

6. Watch & Pray (Prayer / Dependence / Readiness)

Core idea: Ongoing prayerful dependence on God

* Matthew 6:5–13
* Matthew 26:41
* Luke 11:1–13
* Luke 18:1–8
* Acts 1:14
* Acts 4:23–31
* Romans 12:12
* Ephesians 6:18
* Colossians 4:2–6
* 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
* James 5:13–18
* 1 Peter 4:7

Possible Passages for 3/3 Study Series

1. New Birth (Identity)
John 3:1–8
"You must be born again."

2. Transformation (Put Off / Put On)
Ephesians 4:22–24
"Lay aside the old self… be renewed… put on the new self."

3. Word & Spirit (Inner Life)
John 15:1–8
"Abide in Me… apart from Me you can do nothing."

4. Relationships (Community Life)
John 13:34–35
"Love one another… by this all men will know…"

5. Stand Firm (Spiritual Resistance)
Ephesians 6:10–13
"Be strong… put on the full armor… stand firm…"

6. Watch & Pray (Sustaining Life)
Luke 11:1–13
"Lord, teach us to pray…"

If you prefer to use full chapters, consider:

* John 3
* Ephesians 4
* John 15
* John 13
* Ephesians 6
* Luke 11

Sample Accountability Discipleship Questions

1. Looking Back (Obedience)

These focus on doing what God said last time:

* What did God say to you the last time we met?
* What did you do about it?
* What happened as a result?
* If you didn't obey, what got in the way?
* What will you do differently next time?

2. Hearing God (Word & Spirit)

* What has God been showing you in His Word this week?
* What stood out to you most? Why?
* What do you sense God is asking you to do?

3. Heart Check (Character & Transformation)

* Is there any sin you need to confess?
* Are you walking in the fruit of the Spirit?
* Is there anything you are resisting that God is asking you to surrender?

4. Relationships (Love & Obedience in Community)

* How are you loving and serving others this week?
* Is there anyone you need to forgive or reconcile with?

* Who are you intentionally investing in spiritually?

5. Prayer & Spiritual Warfare

* How has your prayer life been this week?
* What are you praying for right now?
* How can I pray for you?
* What temptations are you having to resist?

6. Mission & Multiplication

* Who have you shared with this week?
* Who are you discipling?
* Who could you start meeting with?
* With whom will you share what you learned this week?

7. Looking Forward (Next Steps)

* What is one specific thing God is asking you to do this week?
* When will you do it?

Free Resources on Disciple-Making

There are many free resources on disciple-making, in many languages at:

obeygc2@gmail.com
Here you can find videos, books (for adults and children), music, blog, articles, and other resources. This includes the electronic version of this book and many others.

zume.training
Here you can find a video-based online training for small groups on how to multiply disciples and simple churches.

You can find **songs based on the six topics** of this book at archive.org/details/patterns-in-discipleship-songs.